



Enjoyable reading for the Employees
of Barrington

Spring 2005

The **E** Word

Village of Barrington

Could Someone Steal Your Identity?

Identify theft occurs when someone uses your personal information such as your name, Social Security number, credit card number or other identifying information, without your permission to commit fraud or other crimes.

Identity theft is a serious crime. People whose identities have been stolen can spend months or years cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record. In the meantime, victims may lose job opportunities, be refused loans, education, housing or cars, or even get arrested for crimes they didn't commit.

If you think your identity has been stolen, here's what to do:



1. Contact the fraud department of any one of the **three major credit bureaus** to place a fraud alert on your credit file. The alert requests creditors to contact you before opening any new accounts or making

any changes to your existing accounts. As soon as the credit bureau confirms your fraud alert, the other two credit bureaus will be automatically notified, and all three credit reports will be sent to you free of charge (see article below).

2. **Close the accounts** that you know or believe have been tampered with or opened fraudulently. Use the **ID Theft Affidavit** when disputing unauthorized accounts.

3. **File a police report immediately.** Get a copy of the report to submit to your creditors and others that may require proof of the crime.

4. File your complaint with the **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**. The FTC maintains a database of identity theft cases used by law enforcement agencies for investigations. Filing also helps the commission learn more about identity theft and the problems victims have so they can better assist you.

For more in-depth information, request the U.S. government publication, **ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name**, from the FTC. Also, go to the website:

www.consumer.gov/idtheft/

Get Free Annual Credit Report Online

Monitoring and periodically reviewing your credit report is an effective tool in fighting identity theft. According to law, you are entitled to receive one free credit file disclosure every 12 months. Credit reports were available beginning March 1st for those of us living in the Midwest.

By going to the website,
www.annualcreditreport.com,

you can view and print your report after your identity is confirmed. This central site is sponsored by the three nationwide credit reporting companies, **Equifax**, **Experian** and **TransUnion**.

Reports can also be requested by phone, 877-322-8228, or by mail: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348.

You can choose to order all three credit file disclosures at the same time, or order one now and others later. Also, you can purchase your "**credit score**" when you request your free report. A "credit score" is used by lenders to help determine whether you qualify for a credit card, loan or other service. Generally, the higher the score, the less risk the person represents.

Service Anniversaries

March and April

James Arie, FD, 3/03
Lisa Bobby, PW, 4/04
Paul Evans, B&P, 4/04
Derek Gagliano, PW, 4/99
Gregory Gerdes, PW, 3/00
Blake Grenlie, PW, 4/03
Edward Hartman, FD, 3/97
Gregory Keegan, FD, 3/97
Brian Krull, FD, 3/97
Jack Lukas, PW, 3/80
Diane McCarthy, AS, 4/01
Doris McGhie, PD, 3/04
John Mitchell, FD, 3/97
Joseph Mullen, FD, 3/97
Jeniffer Neuses, PD, 3/96
Lark Sanders, FD, 3/97
Bryan Schober, PW, 4/03
John Spencer, PW, 3/85
Wendy Whitaker, PD, 4/02

Welcoming Babies

Cindy & Don
Wenschhof, FD, son
Jack Thomas, on
February 9

Kari & Ed Hartman, FD,
son, Henry Oscar, on
March 3

IMRF Not Affected by State Budget Woes

In his recent budget address, Gov. Rod Blagojevich discussed the rising cost and growing deficit of Illinois state pensions.

According to IMRF Online, those comments **do not apply to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund**. State funded plans include state teachers, judges, the General Assembly, state employees and university employees. IMRF is funded by local municipalities, not the state of Illinois.

Although Illinois state plans may have



the biggest unfunded liability in the nation and second worst funding level, IMRF is fortunate because it is **locally funded and financially sound**. Currently it is more than 95% funded, according to the website, www.imrf.org. Any changes made to Illinois state pensions will not affect IMRF.

Along the same vein, all IMRF members who are currently covered under the \$12 **NCPERS voluntary life insurance plan** will be given the opportunity to **upgrade** their benefits to a

new \$16-a-month plan as of July 1, 2005, on a guaranteed issue basis. Administrator of both plans is Gallagher Benefit Administrators, Inc., and the underwriter is Prudential.

Only those currently insured in the \$12 plan can upgrade at this time. An enrollment package will be sent these members' homes the week of April 25. This new plan provides an increase in benefits with a corresponding increase in contribution.

ABOUT SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS...

Your employer and financial institution probably will need your SSN for wage and tax reporting purposes. Other private businesses may ask for your SSN to do a credit check, such as when you apply for a loan. Sometimes, however, they simply want your SSN for general record keeping.

If someone asks you for your SSN, ask them:

- Why do you need it?
- How will it be used?
- How do you protect it from being stolen?
- What will happen if I don't give it to you?

Note: If you don't provide your SSN, some businesses may not provide you with the service or benefit that you want.

Learn Telltale Signs of ID Theft

Monitor the balances of your financial accounts. Look for unexplained charges or withdrawals. Other indications of identity theft can be:

- Failing to receive bills or other mail, which could signal an address change by the identity thief
- Receiving credit cards for which you did not apply
- Denial of credit for no apparent reason
- Receiving calls from debt collectors or companies about merchandise or services you didn't buy.

Managing Personal Information

So how can you minimize risk and potential damage?

- When asked for your mother's maiden name on an application, try using a password instead.
- Place passwords on credit cards, bank and phone accounts. Avoid using easily obtained information like your birth date, phone number

or series of consecutive numbers.

- Secure personal information in your home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help, or are having service work done.
- Don't give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you've initiated the contact or are sure who you're dealing with.
- Deposit outgoing mail in U.S. mail boxes, and remove your mail promptly. If you're going to be away for several days, put a "hold" on your mail.
- Your computer can be a goldmine of personal information, so update your virus protection software regularly.
- Don't download files from strangers or click on hyperlinks from people you don't know.



- Use a firewall, especially if you have high-speed or "always on" connection to the Internet.

- Try not to store financial information on a laptop computer. If you do, use a "strong" password—a combination of letters (upper and lower case), numbers and symbols.

- With a laptop, avoid using an automatic log-in feature that saves your user name and password, and always log off when you're finished.

Save this Date: BENEFITS FAIR, May 12th from 8:00 to 11 a.m., Public Safety Bldg.

— More info coming in April newsletter —